

October 2, 2026

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Measuring Soybean Harvest Losses

Soybean finishing weather is fun. Adequate moisture, then hot and dry. Good drying weather, then rain...and more rain. These conditions can end up causing problems even beyond dodging rains and mud holes. Issues like the Green Stem Syndrome I referenced last week plus lodging and shattering can add up before we ever have a chance to get the crop out of the field.

How much loss? Studies vary, but estimates suggest harvest losses under *good* conditions at one to two bushels per acre (four soybeans per square foot is approximately one bushel per acre). If you start to add any of the above factors, it can climb much higher. Most of those losses (90 percent) fall under what's considered gathering losses, but there are pre-harvest and separating/cleaning losses to consider as well. Measuring them doesn't have to be complicated:

- Pre-harvest losses are the first check. Do so by counting seeds (including seeds remaining in pods) in several 10-foot square samples in *front* of the combine.
- Gathering losses are most easily counted by harvesting an area then backing up. The area in front of the combine that is free of chaff is where you evaluate the gathering losses.
- Separating and cleaning losses happen *inside* the machine and are best measured in the area *behind* the combine keeping in mind the pre-harvest and gathering losses already measured.

Once you have an idea where losses are occurring, you can start to determine how to reduce them. For example: if the gathering number starts to approach two bushels per acre, consider reel or cutter bar speed or even harvest speed. Separating/cleaning losses are often related to machine capacity or operator management. You can't do much about pre-harvest losses, but knowing loss levels can help you determine whether weather or harvest moisture, or other factors are at play.

While it's not always encouraging to note the amount of lost crop on the ground, it can be helpful to reducing losses when things *can* be adjusted. It won't be a one-time analysis. Harvest conditions change quickly so check settings regularly. Allow machine automation to do its thing but use operator knowledge to fine tune settings. You're *never* going to reach zero loss, but maybe you *can* get to tolerable loss levels. For harvest loss calculation references, drop me a line at dhallaue@ksu.edu.

Ross Mosteller
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Ragweed Impact on Pasture Production

For those who suffer from seasonal allergies, ragweed can be one of the biggest challenges of fall. Many times, pasture managers get concerned about the presence of this native plant in their pastures. Work conducted at the Kansas State University Agricultural Research Center in Hays by Keith Harmony and other researchers has shown that we might need to look differently at this plant.

Western ragweed is one of the most common native forbs found throughout Kansas rangelands. It is a perennial plant that can form dense colonies from the growth of lateral creeping rootstalks. Western ragweed is used by wildlife for cover and food. The high protein content of its seed makes the plant a valuable staple of bobwhite quail and other grassland birds. Cattle also graze on the native forb. In a long-term grazing trial, cattle utilized up to 50% of the western ragweed produced in moderately stocked pastures. In the trial, more western ragweed was found in lightly stocked pastures than those more heavily stocked.

A grazing trial was conducted on short to midgrass native pastures at the Hays research center to determine if controlling western ragweed could improve animal gains. Four pastures were treated with dicamba shortly after animal stocking in all pastures. The treatment significantly reduced western ragweed density in the sprayed pastures by mid-season of that year as compared to unsprayed pastures.

Nevertheless, almost no ragweed was left in sprayed pastures at the end of the season because plants that initially survived the treatment died by late season. In October, at the end of the season, available ragweed yield and ragweed as a percentage of total dry matter available was greater in unsprayed pastures. However, the ragweed in the unsprayed pastures did not affect grass yield, as the available yield (1,976 lbs./acre) and total yield (2,135 lbs./acre) were not different between treated pastures and untreated pastures. Animal gains between sprayed and unsprayed pastures also were the same throughout the grazing season, with gains averaging 211 lbs./hd.

Grass yield, total pasture yield and animal gains again were similar between sprayed and unsprayed pasture in later studies. The nutritive value of western ragweed and grass also was directly compared in the unsprayed pastures at both mid-season and late season. Western ragweed had greater crude protein (CP) and total digestible nutrient (TDN) content than the harvested grass at all periods in both years (CP 11.7% and TDN 67.2% vs. 7.2% and 47.2%, for western ragweed vs. grass, respectively).

Producers often view western ragweed as a weedy forb, but this study showed ragweed did not affect grass yield, total pasture yield or animal gain. Past research in Kansas has shown that western ragweed needs to be 35% or more of the dry matter composition in a pasture stand to reduce grass growth. The sight of western ragweed may be undesirable to many folks, but it is a natural and native component in Kansas rangelands that provides benefits to wildlife and has the potential to be a higher quality forage for late-season cattle diets.

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

No news article this week.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Shake the Salt Habit for Better Health

Have you ever stopped to consider how much salt you consume each day? Sodium is found in many of the foods we eat, especially processed and packaged foods. Even foods marketed as "healthy" can contain surprisingly high amounts of sodium.

While our bodies need some sodium to function properly, most Americans consume far more than necessary. For healthy adults, the recommended daily limit is approximately 2,300 milligrams of sodium, which is about one teaspoon of salt. For people with high blood pressure or other health concerns, the recommended amount may be even lower.

Sodium is especially common in processed foods such as breads and rolls, sandwiches, deli meats, canned soups, canned vegetables, burritos, tacos, and frozen meals. Reading Nutrition Facts labels can be eye-opening and is a good first step toward reducing sodium intake.

Too much sodium causes the body to retain water. When excess water enters the bloodstream, it increases the volume of blood flowing through the blood vessels, which can raise blood pressure. Over time, high blood pressure increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

Tips for Reducing Sodium

One of the most effective ways to lower your sodium intake is to carefully read food labels. Look for products labeled "no salt added" or "low sodium." Keep in mind that foods labeled "reduced sodium" may still contain significant amounts of sodium compared to naturally low-sodium foods.

Condiments are another common source of hidden sodium. Compare labels on products such as:

- Soy sauce
- Salad dressings
- Dips
- Ketchup
- Pickles
- Marinara sauce
- Salsa

When cooking at home, try these strategies:

- Use less salt during food preparation.
- Add flavor with herbs, spices, garlic, onions, citrus, and vinegar.
- Drain and rinse canned vegetables and beans before using them.
- Use flavorful cooking techniques such as grilling, roasting, braising, or searing.
- Choose lower-sodium versions of your favorite foods whenever possible.

Before using a salt substitute, talk with your healthcare provider. Many salt substitutes contain potassium, which may not be appropriate for people with certain heart or kidney conditions.

Watch Sodium When Dining Out

Restaurant meals are often high in sodium. Be especially cautious of menu items described as cured, marinated, pickled, smoked, teriyaki, barbecued, or served in broth. Foods served with soy sauce, cocktail sauce, or other prepared sauces can also be significant sources of sodium.

Don't hesitate to ask for sauces and dressings on the side or request modifications to your order. Chinese food, in particular, can be high in sodium because of the sauces used in many dishes. Requesting sauce on the side allows you to enjoy the flavor while controlling how much sodium you consume.

Reducing sodium doesn't mean sacrificing taste. By experimenting with herbs, spices, citrus, and other seasonings, you can create delicious meals with less salt. Small changes can make a big difference over time. Your heart, blood vessels, and overall health will benefit from every step you take toward a lower-sodium lifestyle.

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Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety

No news article this week.